

THE BIRTH OF A CONTROVERSY: THE PRESIDENCY OF  
JACOBO ARBENZ GUZMAN

by

Linda Middleton Williams

Submitted as an Honors Paper  
in the  
Department of History

The University of North Carolina  
at Greensboro  
1965

Approved by

Franklin D. Parker  
Director

Examining Committee

Craig Z. Vogler

L.C. Wright

Margaret A. Hunt

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
II BACKGROUND. . . . .	3
A. The Country . . . . .	3
B. The People. . . . .	5
C. The History . . . . .	7
III THE DRAMA OF THE REVOLUTION . . . . .	10
IV THE PROTAGONISTS. . . . .	19
A. The United Fruit Company. . . . .	19
B. The Communist Party of Guatemala. . . . .	23
C. The Labor Movement of Guatemala . . . . .	26
D. President Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán. . . . .	29
V CONCLUSION: THE BIRTH OF A CONTROVERSY . . . . .	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	46
APPENDIX . . . . .	48

## I. INTRODUCTION

In June of 1954 the United States of America was prospering under the leadership of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Korea was no longer in the headlines and Senator McCarthy was busy with his purge of high government officials of communist leanings. Only minor problems in Latin America bothered the State Department until tiny Guatemala hit the headlines, sharing the front page of the New York Times with Senator McCarthy. The Security Council of the United Nations was called to session, the Peace Commission of the Organization of American States met, and the State Department found itself confronted with a major problem. Across the world, Uncle Sam was burned in effigy and riots protested alleged United States actions.

What had happened? A group of Guatemalan rebels, led by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, had crossed the border between Honduras and Guatemala and begun a revolution against the existing Guatemalan government of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán.

Why did a rebellion in Guatemala become world news? Because both the United States and Russia were indirectly or directly involved in this tiny country, one of the "Banana Republics". This rebellion was the first confrontation in Latin America of these two great powers. As such, the event was a significant moment in the history of Latin America and in the development of the Cold War.

The importance of the 1954 change of government in Guatemala was recognized at the time for the next years saw a voluminous amount of literature appear on the subject. Many supporters of Colonel Arbenz wrote angry reports of United States intervention bringing failure to the social revolution in Guatemala. On the other hand many reports appeared of Colonel Castillo saving his country from communism, with or without help from the United States.

Our purpose is not to declare one view right and the other wrong but to learn from both in our attempt to understand the man who rose to power, power which brought him to exile in 1954. Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán faced problems and issues in Guatemala which led to his final confrontation--with defeat.

Let us begin at the beginning.

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. Country<sup>1</sup>

Guatemala is a beautiful if small country located on the isthmus between North and South America. Though her size is only 42,000 square miles she is the largest country of Central America. Sharing her northern border with Mexico, to the southeast she faces Honduras and El Salvador. She has very little Caribbean coastline for, to the east, British Honduras is her neighbor. (Official maps of Guatemala show this as Belize, a part of Guatemala. The crown colony is a constant source of irritation in Anglo-Guatemalan diplomatic relations.)

Topographically and climatically Guatemala is a land of variety. From her tierra caliente to her high mountains she offers almost any kind of climate one could desire. The ancient Mayas chose the densely forested Petén for their civilization which declined before the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century. Their descendants chose the high intermontane basins to cultivate maize, dietary staple of the isolated Mayan communities. The Spaniards arriving in Guatemala found no riches to lure them into the Indian world and so chose the tierra templada for their huge

---

<sup>1</sup>From: Preston Everett James, Latin America (3d. ed.; New York: Odyssey Press, 1959); and Franklin D. Parker, The Central American Republics (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).



estates. It was not until the twentieth century that the hot low-lands were occupied--by North Americans who set up commercial plantations of bananas to give Guatemala her name as a "Banana Republic".

Guatemala, though called by this name, does not export bananas as her major cash crop. Guatemala is almost totally dependent on the foreign market for coffee which comprises 70-80% of her exports. Bananas account for another 10%; rarely have they constituted over 20% of Guatemala's exports. Chicle and wood products from the Petén are only a small part of her yearly exports.

Since pre-colonial times Guatemala has had an agricultural economy. The Mayas lived as they still do today: by obtaining a meagre existence from the soil using primitive methods of maize cultivation. The Spaniards set up huge estates--haciendas--and used them for grazing and cash crops. Until the invention of chemical dyes in the 19th century indigo and cochineal were exported from Guatemala. Only products such as these could bring a profit with the high cost of transportation. German immigrants set up their haciendas and produced coffee when the demand in Europe grew at the end of the 19th century. Spaniards took up the boom and coffee became the major export of Guatemala.

In 1906 the United Fruit Company began production of bananas in Guatemala but the great depression set the industry back. Since then they have been the second major export of Guatemala, though a poor second to coffee.

## B. The People<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally Mayan, Guatemala today remains a predominantly Indian country. Of her 3.5 million people, over 50% are pure Mayas; slightly fewer are called ladinos, and not over 1 or 2% are pure European descent.

The Mayas remain isolated in their intermontane basins and play little part in the political life of Guatemala. They barely exist in these basins because they are too crowded and the soil is often too exhausted to produce adequate food for all. The close-knit Indian societies work their lands, which are owned communally, and have little contact with the outside world. The basins are often inaccessible except by foot or mule and many Indians are born, live and die in their one little village. Since World War I slow changes have occurred in these high (8,000'-11,000') mountains. Indians have been forced to look for income elsewhere. They have gone to the plantations for seasonal work (at extremely low wages) but most of them then return to their communities. They have little concern for or knowledge of political developments in the country. In spite of their isolation the Mayas are an important factor in the economic life of Guatemala. As seasonal farm hands they are slow and inefficient. In agriculture, subsistence farming takes up more acreage for maize than all commercial export crops. The inefficiency is apparent in statistics: 80% of Guatemala's people are engaged in

---

<sup>2</sup>From: Nathan L. Whetten, Guatemala: the Land and the People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).



farming 10% of her land. Guatemala cannot ignore the Mayas in order to develop a stable economy.

The second largest group of Guatemala's people is called ladino. Of this group, many are of pure Indian blood and many are of mixed descent. The term includes all Indians and mestizoes who have adopted the ways of the conquering Spaniard. They have left their traditional community, ways of dressing, and habits of the past to live in towns or on farms as laborers. The ladinos become the peasants of the Spanish society. In more recent times a few ladinos have become a small middle class of which the "upper" echelons are the German immigrants and their descendants. Though the ladinos are a more direct part of national life than the Indians they have had little to say in governing the country. They have been separated from the ruling class by a wide gap.

The Spanish aristocracy has been very systematic in maintaining its position of power since colonial times. The Indians have been left to their isolated communities, and debt peonage has kept the ladino in his position of inferiority. There has been a succession of dictators in Guatemala who have successfully guarded the power of the Spanish aristocracy. One dictator was ousted by another but the Spaniards maintained their group as the rulers of the land. As such they owned vast haciendas which were run by hired help in order to maintain the town life of the aristocrats. Guatemala City, built after the former capital Antigua was destroyed by an earthquake, is the center of culture, power, and aristocracy of the country. Situated in a 5,000' high basin its climate is the ideal choice for

descendants of the colonial lords. From Guatemala City the Spanish aristocracy still rules the land with few changes in the traditional style of dictatorship. North Americans completed the railways across the country and a few roads have been built since the 1930's to help bring Guatemala into the modern world. However, she has a long road ahead of her before the traditional ways of Spaniards and Indians disappear.

### C. The History<sup>3</sup>

The Mayan civilization had disappeared from the Petén area long before the first Spaniards arrived in Guatemala. The first group under Pedro de Alvarado arrived in 1524 and found Mayan descendants in the high intermontane basin. They found few minerals but the rich soils of the country impelled them to settle and become gentleman farmers relying on Indian labor. The population of Guatemala grew slowly but her capital became the center of the Captaincy General of Guatemala, encompassing all of Central America.

The colonial period ended when the Spanish descendants proclaimed their independence in 1821. Mexico was fighting for her freedom from Spain at this time and little attention was paid to the newly independent Captaincy General to the South. Mexico tried to reclaim the territory after she had secured her independence but the union failed. In 1823 the United Provinces of Central America was born under the leadership of Guatemala but by 1838 five separate

---

<sup>3</sup>From: Hubert Clinton Herring, A History of Latin America (2d. ed.; New York: Knopf, 1961); and Parker, The Central American Republics.

countries were in existence. All later attempts at reunion failed and Guatemala thus became a republic on her own after 1838.

Guatemala as a separate country was delivered into the hands of a dictator at her birth. An illiterate conservative, Rafael Carrera maintained order and thus the support of the aristocracy until his death in 1865. This time the liberals took over with a dictator of their own, Justo Rufino Barrios.

Where Carrera was a strong supporter of the Catholic Church Barrios was extremely anticlerical. In spite of this he is the most exalted 19th century ruler of Guatemala. He restored the finances of the government which Carrera had destroyed and he encouraged diversification of crops and immigration. As an esteemed leader he decided to reestablish the unity of Central America and was killed in his first battle to make it effective. His dream died with him but the Liberals maintained control until 1898 and the dictatorship of Manuel Estrada Cabrera.

From the era of Barrios Guatemala now turned the clock back to tyranny and a government of thieves and bandits. The rule of Estrada Cabrera lasted for 22 years and there is little good to be said about it. Professing to be a true advocate of education he built few schools to support his statements. In spite of the horrors of his rule Estrada Cabrera was kept in power by an efficient secret police. He was finally ousted and Guatemala spent ten years in turmoil in an attempt to establish a democracy. The effort failed and the 1920's ended in disillusionment as the last dictator came to power.

Jorge Ubico ruled his country strictly for 14 years. He completed many public works through the use of forced Indian labor: roads, hospitals, etc. Professing friendship for the Indians he nevertheless did little to integrate them in the life of the nation. He ruled efficiently but the days of a long-lived dictatorship were numbered in Guatemala. Young intellectuals were excited by events in Mexico and Russia since the 1910's and were anxious to take these new ideas to their homeland. In 1944 the young Guatemalans attempted just that: for 10 years the country was in the throes of social revolution. The curtain fell in 1954 but the ten years could not be erased from her history.

### III. THE DRAMA OF THE REVOLUTION

The end of Ubico's rule marked the beginning of the social revolution in Guatemala. In June, 1944, Ubico succumbed to the pressure of the people and Federico Ponce Vaides became the head of a triumvirate charged with writing a new Constitution. Ponce, like Ubico, had dictatorial tendencies but his government was short lived: he was forced to resign in October, 1944.

The new triumvirate was formed by Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, Jorge Toriello Garrido, and Francisco Javier Arana. These three men, two military and one civilian, wrote the Constitution of 1944, granting to all Guatemalans rights denied by dictatorship. For the first time the Constitution supported the right of workers to organize--a right promptly taken by the laborers.

With the promulgation of the new Constitution, a Congress and a new President took office after being duly elected by the people. President Juan José Arévalo was sworn into office on the 15th of March, 1945. The new President had the support of a large segment of the population; he was called to campaign for the office from his professorship at the University of La Plata in Argentina. A civilian, an educator, and a reformer, Arévalo campaigned vigorously for the office to which he was elected.

With the installation of the new President exiles from Ubico's rule flocked back to Guatemala. Many had been in Mexico where



socialism was the object of study of the intellectuals. These Guatemalans, aided by a group of leaders from other Latin American countries, returned to their homeland to organize labor and political groups. Their tendency toward socialism included communism, and the Communist Party of Guatemala was born during Arévalo's Presidency. Communist affiliation and control of labor syndicates also became a fact during these years. The Marxist school, Escuela Claridad, was opened only to be closed by Arévalo in 1946. Another attempt was made to open a Marxist school but Arévalo's Minister of Government ordered it to be closed in 1949.

Besides these feeble attempts to limit communist growth Arévalo's term produced significant legislation and set the stage for the Presidency of Arbenz. Though the workers had the right to organize granted in the Constitution, remaining for the President was the task of writing a Code of Labor. Arévalo was proud of this achievement as he established the Labor Code as the law of the land in May, 1947. Not only were workers granted the right to organize, but they now had the Government behind them, limiting the powers of the once established oligarchy. Arévalo was aware of the imperfections of the law but he firmly believed in it as a great step forward in the evolution of "spiritual socialism".<sup>4</sup> The President, however, failed to assess its greatest weakness which became apparent soon after Arbenz took power. The major fallacy of the Labor Code characterizes the entire

---

<sup>4</sup> Juan Jose Arévalo, "Al entregar al pueblo el Código de Trabajo", in Escritos políticos y discursos (Havana, 1953), pp. 389-96.



Presidency of Arévalo: the total freedom granted to the labor movement and to the nation fostered the development of communist leadership and power.

Arévalo was a teacher and philosopher by nature and experience. Possessor of a degree from an Argentina University, Doctor of Philosophy in Education, Juan José Arévalo could attract the people but could not fulfill the role of President. At 42 his "spiritual socialism" seemed attractive but idealistic--the Communist group were the practical people who took advantage of the situation. Arévalo tried to remain above politics and to establish an ideal democracy in his small nation. He could not see that traditions of over two centuries are not easily forgotten. Since the time of the conquest Guatemala had obeyed her leaders: the conquistadores, the church, the dictators. Arévalo realized his people had been servile yet believed that democracy would burst into full bloom overnight in the fertile soil of his homeland. From 1945 to 1951 Juan José Arévalo led his nation into a new era in which democracy could flourish, but side by side with communism.

By 1949 the elections were taking shape for December, 1950. Colonel Arana and Colonel Arbenz were the major contenders for the highest office in the land. But Arana did not live to keep the electorate. Quite popular with the people he posed a serious threat to the election of Arbenz until he was sent in search of clandestine arms on July 18, 1949. On the return trip he was ambushed and assassinated.<sup>5</sup> Though the general belief indicates it was the work

---

<sup>5</sup>Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla, El Quetzal no es rojo (Guatemala, 1956), p. 126.

of Arbenz' loyal men nothing has been proved about the mysterious death of Colonel Arana. Arévalo refused to investigate the case as did his successor, Jacobo Arbenz.

The new President took office in 1951; Guatemala was prepared to continue her march toward a new day of democratic government. Labor unions were organized, coffee prices were higher than ever before, many political parties were registered (though the communist was not), and Arbenz had been chosen to lead the country forward. In a little more than 3 years, Arbenz had led the country to a point of no return. The only alternative was rebellion and Colonel Castillo Armas led the forces to end the era of social revolution.

Jacobo Arbenz became President by a large majority. He made repeated attempts to maintain this unity and thus communists were able to take many key positions of power. Arbenz refused to limit them in any way because he claimed them for his most loyal supporters. Indeed they were and their rewards were handsome. Arbenz had campaigned on the promise of agrarian reform (which Arévalo had not carried out) and in May, 1952, the Agrarian Reform bill was railroaded through Congress to become law in a matter of hours. It stated that unused lands of haciendas could be expropriated with indemnization to be paid in long-term agrarian bonds. The control of appeals was placed in the hands of the President, by-passing the Supreme Court of Guatemala. The National Agrarian Department was established to handle land redistribution.<sup>6</sup> Though not solely responsible for the act the

---

<sup>6</sup>Whetten, Guatemala, p. 156.

Communist Party claimed to be the true friend of the peasant with agrarian reform as proof of this friendship. However, the agrarian reform links to communism finally brought the Presidency of Arbenz to an end.

The first hacendados affected by expropriation took their case to the Supreme Court, which voted in favor of the landowners. Arbenz removed these judges and thus ended all appeals for the rights of landowners. Peasants were encouraged to denounce "unused" lands and agrarian reform became a political tool to gain peasant support, ceasing to be an economic move. As violence grew to be the common law of the land in rural areas the statistics on agrarian reform grew confused. And by the end of 1953 the government of Arbenz was beginning to fear rebellion, especially under the leadership of Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas.

In 1950 Castillo had tried to overthrow Arévalo from the military base Aurora. He failed and was imprisoned,<sup>7</sup> but made a daring escape to Colombia the following year. As Communist power grew the anti-communist groups within the country gradually died out as their members became exiles. On April 4, 1953, Guatemala left the Organization of Central American States (ODECA) accusing her neighbors of trying to intervene in her affairs.<sup>8</sup> Colonel Castillo had set up quarters in Honduras. The next step was to sound a note of discord at the meeting in Caracas of the Organization of American States.

---

<sup>7</sup>Samayoa, El Zuetzal no es rojo, p. 143.

<sup>8</sup>See Appendix.

The United States presented a resolution which established international communism as intervention and a threat to the peace of the Americas, subject to action according to the Rio Treaty of 1949.<sup>9</sup> Guatemala claimed this step was a front to call for intervention in her program of agrarian reform in order to protect the interests of the United Fruit Company. She also opposed a resolution presented by Panama to ease racial tensions in the Americas. Guatemala based her opposition on the fact that communism was connected to racial tension. By March, 1954, Guatemala had become a champion of "democracy"--and communism in the Americas.

But while Guatemala was proclaiming her beliefs there were things happening back at home. By January, 1954, terror ruled rural Guatemala. The United States was becoming more aware of the small nation: on January 15, Senator Wiley of Wisconsin announced that Guatemala had direct ties to Moscow.<sup>10</sup> At this time Guillermo Toriello became Foreign Minister of Guatemala. Arbenz was becoming insecure early in 1954 for political arrests came more frequently: on January 26 a round of arrests was made at the discovery of a subversive net. Those arrested were radio announcers of stations which had not yet come under Government control. Journalists felt the pressure enough to protest their right to freedom of the press.

---

<sup>9</sup>The Rio Treaty of 1949 established a defense system for the hemisphere. With the Cold War threatening peace the American states adopted this treaty to insure a united hemisphere against an outside attacker.

<sup>10</sup>The New York Times, January 15, 1954.

As agrarian reform was becoming uncontrolled and the government was regularly discovering plots to overthrow Arbenz, labor unions were adding to the confusion by strikes of one large group or another occurring constantly. Chaos and terror were working hand in hand to bring a climax to the situation. In April 1954 the Archbishop of Guatemala spoke out against the close connections of Arbenz with communism. A Catholic country, Guatemala listened to his words but found little that could be done. The battle of nerves was reaching the breaking point and on April 28 five children were arrested for writing "32" on the walls.<sup>11</sup> This referred to Article 32 of the Constitution of Guatemala which forbade the organization of international political groups in Guatemala. Clandestine radios were taking an active role in this war of nerves, urging the people to prepare to join the revolutionaries.

The beginning of the end came May 17, 1954 when the Alfhelm landed in Guatemala with an arms shipment from Poland. This helped unite the Americas in a desire to act, but nothing happened immediately except that the United States increased her sale of arms to Nicaragua and Honduras to help balance the military power of Central America.

The situation in Guatemala became extremely tense as the exiles began dropping pamphlets in the cities. Arbenz prepared to weather the storm and tried to settle the United Fruit Company expropriations, the basis for United States-Guatemalan disagreement. The United States

---

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., April 28, 1954.



claimed that the issue was communism but Arbenz flatly denied this accusation. On June 8 Arbenz suspended civil liberties and a meeting of American foreign ministers was called for the first of July. Arbenz felt secure with the Army and planned to arm the peasants but June 15 brought him a rude shock: the Army sent the President a list of questions about communists in power, and June 18 brought revolt under Castillo Armas.

Guatemala called the revolt invasion and appealed to the Security Council and the Organization of American States for help. She soon withdrew her request to the Organization of American States thenceforward seeking help only in the Security Council. With the omnipresent veto a resolution calling for a cease fire was all that could be passed.

While the Security Council met and the Organization of American States decided to send an investigating committee--at the request of the accused aggressors, Nicaragua and Honduras--the rebels in Guatemala gained support. The Army refused to fight or to arm the peasant militia. After days of confusion Arbenz, alone and defeated, resigned on June 27. Hundreds flocked to embassies for asylum, including the ex-President, and Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas became the new President of Guatemala. A communist purge ended the era of the social revolution in Guatemala.

The story of the revolutionary years in Guatemala therefore requires a study of the men and organizations who grappled with issues and values to shape the course of history.



In 1944 very few people outside the oligarchy denied the need for change in Guatemala. She was a "backward" nation, her economy was dependent on the world coffee market, her political life was far from democratic (though, as Chester Lloyd Jones suggests, her history left her unprepared for anything beyond an enlightened despot,<sup>12</sup>) and her people desperately needed a new lease on life.

Juan Jose Arévalo seemed to have found the path in his "spiritual socialism". Believing that life is more than economics alone, the professor-President wanted to stimulate the intellectual life of the nation as well. He allowed a free exchange of ideas which had narrowed considerably by 1954. His successor, Jacobo Arbenz, was caught in his own private life and the power of a well-organized, if small, group of communists. With the new ideas abroad in Guatemala the well established United Fruit Company became the whipping boy of a campaign against the "old ways" of "imperialism"--Yankee imperialism. And as the old gave way to the new the power of labor syndicates united against the United Fruit Company and subsidiaries, joining hands with the political power of communists to lead Arbenz on to his destiny.

Jacobo Arbenz, the Communist Party and its leaders, the labor movement of Guatemala, and the United Fruit Company had separate histories until 1951; their individual stories shaped their years of conflict and turmoil, 1951-1954. For this reason we have chosen to separate the people and groups involved in the 1954 climax.

---

<sup>12</sup>Chester Lloyd Jones, Guatemala Past and Present (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1940).

#### IV. THE PROTAGONISTS

##### A. The United Fruit Company<sup>13</sup>

This company worth millions of dollars today was born in 1870 when Captain Lorenzo Dow Baker loaded 160 bunches of bananas on his fishing schooner and headed from Jamaica to Jersey City. The bananas proved to be a successful cargo and he began taking the fruit to Boston where Andrew Preston of Seaverns & Company sold the produce. The two men persuaded nine others to join them in 1885 to form the Boston Fruit Company. The new company prospered by selling bananas from the Caribbean isles.

While Boston Fruit was prospering Minor C. Keith, renowned for building railroads, was developing a banana industry in Central America to ship to New Orleans. The need for greater efficiency brought a merger in 1899: the United Fruit Company, owning 112 miles of railroad, 212,394 acres of land with 61,263 in production, and \$11,230,000 in capital.<sup>14</sup> With Preston in Boston to expand the markets and Keith in Central America to build railroads the company had a capital of \$215 million by 1930.

In Guatemala by 1890 San José and Champerico, Pacific ports, were connected to the capital city and Puerto Barrios lacked 60 miles

---

<sup>13</sup>See Stacy May and Galo Plaza, The United Fruit Company in Latin America (Washington: National Planning Association, 1958).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

of rail to be connected to the capital. In 1904 Keith took over the 136 finished miles to complete the line. The rest of the rail system of Guatemala was taken over in 1912 in the birth of the International Railways of Central America (IRCA), operating 887 miles of track by 1930. Financial difficulties made International Railways of Central America seek help from the United Fruit Company in 1936. The agreement stopped United Fruit from building a proposed port near its Tiquisate lands on the Pacific in order to use the rails to the east. This saved the International Railways of Central America from ruinous competition of a port close to the coffee lands of the Pacific. But the agreement provided a point of disagreement with Guatemalans who resented the special privileges of United Fruit on the rails.

The contract with International Railways of Central America was not the only one to produce discord in Guatemala. Her government agreements, too, made with early dictators, caused resentment and a desire for change in 1944. Low taxes, exemptions, and privileges had been granted to the company for developing jungle lands into profits for the company and the country. As United Fruit grew the fear of its power grew also--until little Guatemala felt overwhelmed by "el pulpo" (the octopus).<sup>15</sup> Though bananas are between 10 and 20% of Guatemalan exports each year, United Fruit exports are around 75% of this total. In this respect it is a large company providing a major portion of the second largest export of Guatemala.

---

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

A third point involving the United Fruit Company with the 1944 revolution is intimately involved with agrarian reform: the company lands total over four times the amount planted in bananas.<sup>16</sup> The land is used to provide room for future expansion but a considerable amount is involved in providing housing for workers, crops for food, facilities to get the bananas to the market and to control diseases. Panama disease attacks the roots of the banana plant and the only effective control has proved to be flooding the infected area. This method, as well as control of a second major fungus producing the sigatoka blight, is feasible only on extensive tracts of land. To be efficient (until the late 1950's brought new methods) a banana producer needed to work on a large scale operation. In spite of this it is fair to say that United Fruit holdings were far larger than required at the time Arbenz came to power.

Looking at both sides the United Fruit is put in proper perspective and yet it is often at a disadvantage in Latin America because it is viewed from the past and from its impact on local economies. In Guatemala the United Fruit Company is the largest private enterprise, operating Liquisate (18,000 acres of bananas) and Bananera, almost wiped out by disease. At Bananera the lands once used for bananas have been converted to food crops because Panama disease impedes replanting bananas. To add to its own production United Fruit has 10,000 acres in contracts with independent farmers who receive technical assistance and disease control in return for which the company buys the bananas produced. Except when Ubico froze wages on the United Fruit plantations, the company workers

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

averaged over twice as much income per day as other agricultural workers. Though the record shows United Fruit as an enlightened foreign investor in Guatemala in the 1950's, the company became the focal point of hatred in the campaign against United States imperialism. The company came under fire as "el pulpo", running Guatemalan railroads (IRCA) communications system (telephone and telegraph), and, to a lesser extent, the Electric Company. With the agrarian reform law United Fruit lands were expropriated in large amounts and the bonds for payment were at the 1930 value of the land. This was the listed rate for taxation and United Fruit appealed the decision. The State Department intervened on behalf of the company and thus became the "stooge" of the United Fruit Company. The labor movement added to the trials of the company by striking for as much as a month at a time as they did in May-June, 1954. With the advantage of hindsight we can say that United Fruit could have been more compromising with the revolutionary governments. But it is also true that the campaign of hatred damaged United Fruit property as well as its reputation. Admittedly, the United Fruit Company left itself open to criticism for owning land it did not need and for refusing to negotiate with the new government. Compared to Guatemala the company is a colossus though it is one of the smallest of the major United States corporations. A more adequate evaluation requires a look at the opponents of the United Fruit Company.



## B. The Communist Party of Guatemala

Communism had been heard of in Guatemala before the October Revolution. In the 1920's Juan Pablo Wainright had helped with the beginnings, but Ubico put an end to these first attempts to establish a Party. Wainright and the other leaders appeared in El Salvador and took part in the attempted 1932 revolution.

With Ubico out of power and a new constitution Marxist leaders appeared on the scene again. Marxists from other Latin American countries went to the new Guatemala: Salvadoreans, Chileans, Mexicans including the labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano. The process of organizing proceeded rapidly.

In 1945 the Escuela Claridad was opened under Abel Cuenca. Organization of labor syndicates had already begun. A number of young Guatemalans were taking positions of leadership; chiefs among this group were José Manuel Fortuny, Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez (labor leader), Bernardo Alvarado Monzón, Alfredo Guerra Borges, and Carlos Manuel Pellecer (in Escuintla he ran the peasant movement in agrarian reform).

Fortuny became the undisputed leader of the party. Born in 1916 in the department of Santa Rosa he quit his university career to become a radio announcer. With the revolution in 1944 he became active in politics and became Secretary General of the government coalition. On the side he founded the secret Vanguardia Democrática which became the Communist Party of Guatemala in 1947.<sup>17</sup> In 1948

---

<sup>17</sup>Robert J. Alexander, Communism in Latin America (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 356.



he became secretary of the organization but until 1950 the Party remained in secrecy.

The Party was not completely free to move during Arévalo's Presidency and caution was used to advance the goals of the Party. In 1946 Arévalo closed the Marxist Escuela Claridad and sent several key men on diplomatic missions: Carlos Manuel Pellecer was sent to Paris; Alfredo Guerra Borges was also among those sent abroad.<sup>18</sup>

While labor was being organized other mass organizations were formed in 1947. The Alianza de Juventud Democrática de Guatemala, Alianza Femenina Guatemalteca (in which Señora de Arbenz was active), and others were active in Peace Congresses. Even artists and writers were organized in the Saker-Ti. Opposition groups existed but lacked the close coordination of the Communist front groups; their splintering led to their gradual loss of what power they might have had in unity.

In May 1949 the break into the open began as Fortuny led a group of communists out of the government coalition, the Partido de Acción Revolucionaria. They again founded a Marxist school, Jacobo Sánchez, under Alfredo Guerra Borges with Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez; but the Minister of Government closed this one down.<sup>19</sup>

With Arbenz as President the Communist Party gained strength openly. Their candidates were supported by the government in the 1953 Congressional elections and five Communists were elected to

---

<sup>18</sup>Samayoa, El Quetzal no es rojo, p. 116.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

Congress, quickly gaining positions of power in the legislature. In 1952 the Party officially registered in its own right with Fortuny still at its head. Though no Communists were ever in the official cabinet the home of the President was a salon for Marxist discussion. María Cristina Vilanova de Arbenz was an excellent hostess, and good friends of the President, such as Fortuny, frequented his home.

The President of Guatemala could also say that the top government agencies were not Communist. However, the Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social came under Party control after Arbenz came to power. In 1952 Decree 900 established agrarian reform as law and a national Agrarian Department was set up; Waldemar Barrios Klee, openly a Party member, was among the leaders. Pellecer was in charge of the reform in Escuintla and the peasants soon learned that communism and Arbenz had given them land. They were encouraged to take over land and "denounce" it for expropriation and Escuintla became the center of terror as violence soon was out of Party control.

Chaos in rural areas was accompanied by labor strikes in urban centers and Communist power snowballed. In 1953 the Jacobo Sánchez school was reopened. Radio was in the hands of the government aides; as Arbenz said, "Communists are the strongest supporters of my government."<sup>20</sup> Even Congress helped: to honor Stalin at his death it held a minute of silence.<sup>21</sup> By 1954 Communist Party members had become key

---

<sup>20</sup>Jorge del Valle Matheu, La verdad sobre el 'caso de Guatemala' (Guatemala, 1956), p. 145.

<sup>21</sup>Samayoa, El Quetzal no es rojo, p. 189.

figures in the government, supporting and advising President Arbenz.

The President refused overtures of the Organization of Central American States and the Organization of American States, and his Army to cut back the power of the Party. As Toriello announced in Caracas, Communism is an idea and is therefore incapable of intervention in government. But the government supporting and supported by Fortuny and his Party was not to last much longer. Financial difficulties, lack of Army support, and lack of thorough peasant control combined to leave Arbenz unable to oppose the invading rebels. The Party of strong support for the government lacked the real power to survive; their attempts to win support of the Roman Catholic Church and the Army were unsuccessful. Communists had been trained to fill the leadership vacuum caused by the end of the dictatorship. But their power, in the final encounter, proved to be small and intellectual, and intellect cannot fight guns. In leadership their main source of power had been the infant labor syndicates which we shall now examine.

#### C. Labor Movement of Guatemala

Before October 1944 cheap Indian labor was considered one of the great natural resources of the country. The hacendados using old and inefficient production methods needed cheap labor in order to make a profit. Jorge Ubico helped the situation by establishing that all workers (and Indians) carry work cards; on these the number of days of work should be marked until they had fulfilled their required amount of work. Illiterate Indians thus became easy prey for the land owners and Indian labor on the coffee haciendas continued

to bring in profit. To avoid competition from a major hiring company, in 1936 Ubico fixed wages on United Fruit lands at 50¢ per day instead of the \$1. which the company was prepared to pay.<sup>22</sup> In spite of this limitation United Fruit was the highest paying land owner in Guatemala.

With the situation set so definitely against the working man it is logical that the revolution would bring syndication of labor and labor unrest in a fight for rights he had never known. Lacking strong organization the infant movement quickly fell to the men trained under the guidance of Vicente Lombardo Toledano. His affiliation with the Marxist labor movement set the tone for Guatemala. As head of the Congreso de Trabajadores de América Latina he arrived in 1946 to study the situation. By 1951 all labor syndicates had been united.<sup>23</sup>

But things had begun to happen even before the arrival of Lombardo Toledano. Teachers organized in 1944, railroad workers soon followed and others were organized in rapid succession. When the Marxist school was formed in 1945 the Sindicato de Acción y Mejoramiento Ferrocarrilero (railroad syndicate) left the organization of syndicates (Congreso de Trabajadores Guatemaltecos) but the teachers remained with the secretary of the Congreso de Trabajadores Guatemaltecos, Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez. The separated group could not live long; in 1947 it rejoined the communist leaders in the Congreso Nacional de Unión Sindical, which joined the Russian-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>23</sup>Valle Matheu, La Verdad, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup>Samayoa, El Quetzal no es rojo, p. 112.

With labor organized politics entered the scene and a political committee was formed for the union. By 1947 the picture was very optimistic for labor. In May Arévalo himself spoke to the Workers' meeting to announce the promulgation of his Labor Code. This protected the workers above all others and with the Presidency of Arbenz strikes were almost continuous in the country. Dock workers forced the government to take over the administration of the port of San José. Railway workers and electrical workers also brought times of crisis to their companies. And United Fruit was hit time and time again by strikes for higher wages, shorter hours, and more privileges. Labor unrest had become so important in producing the situation that the New York Times, on June 14, carried the story of the end of a month-long strike of 4,000 workers.<sup>25</sup> The labor syndicates helped produce the economic and political chaos which brought Arbenz to the end of his career.

The final result of the actions taken by labor was unexpected, for their primary aim had been to support nationalist feelings and the President. Labor, both urban and rural, was able to provide marches in support of the President at any time. With mass demonstrations of thousands it seemed unlikely that he could lose his popularity and power in just a matter of days.

The support seen in these mass meetings was perhaps misleading but in a sense it was genuine. The working man had never before had such freedom and he was told that the government with Party help

---

<sup>25</sup>The New York Times, June 14, 1954.



had made this possible. The peasants, too, were taught that they were indebted to the President and the Party. It was the first time someone had bothered to do anything for them and therefore gratitude in the shape of loyalty was forthcoming. When the time came to fight, however, no arms were given to the working peasants because the Army refused to cooperate. Basically farmers and workers lacking a thorough indoctrination, the mass of people under Communist leadership did not rise to support Arbenz, making it possible for Castillo Armas to succeed. Arbenz, the key figure, was forced to resign because he failed to unite the country.

#### D. President Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán

Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, son of a Swiss-born pharmacist and a mestizo mother, was born in Quezaltenango in 1913. Appointed to the Escuela Politécnica (the West Point of Guatemala) Arbenz graduated and gradually rose in the ranks of the Army. As a lieutenant he married the daughter of a wealthy and aristocratic Salvadorean coffee family, María Cristina Vilanova, a college graduate. Because she married far beneath her station the young couple were outcasts in both Salvadorean and Guatemalan society. Determined and ambitious María Cristina became a decisive influence on her husband.

The Arbenz couple grew to hate the society which had cast them out and, though Jacobo became a captain under Ubico, the young officer felt a personal dislike of the dictator who represented the society which had snubbed him.<sup>26</sup> He played an important role in overthrowing

---

<sup>26</sup> David James, Red Design for the Americas: Guatemalan Prelude (New York: Praeger, 1954), p. 56.



the dictator and as a member of the triumvirate helped write the new Constitution of Guatemala.

In her own way María Cristina Vilanova de Arbenz reacted against society. An intellectual young woman she read Marx avidly and her friends in Guatemala were of similar ideas. Her tertulias were popular and, in her home, Marx was the usual topic of discussion. The Fortunys were regulars at the Arbenz home; other Latin Americans who flocked to Guatemala were also welcome. Vicente Lombardo Toledano was among these.<sup>27</sup> The wife of the Minister of Defense under Arévalo and then wife of the President, Señora de Arbenz proved to be courageous as well as ambitious.<sup>28</sup> As a Marxist leader she was active in the mass organizations affiliated with the Communist Party. Her philosophy and her personal ambition combined with her intelligence to become the subtle influence on Jacobo Arbenz.

When Arbenz became the President in 1951 the triumphant woman at his side openly demonstrated her affiliations. The Communist Party members gradually assumed responsible positions in the government though never was one placed in an official top executive position. Fortuny remained a close friend and adviser to Arbenz though he was defeated in the 1953 Congressional elections.

The most revolutionary bill passed by Congress under Arbenz was, of course, the agrarian reform law. Railroaded through Congress it was clearly unconstitutional on at least one count: The ultimate power was

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>28</sup>Samayoa, El Quetzal no es rojo, p. 164.

vested in the executive combining in the President both executive (administrative) and judicial (appeal) powers.

In the Constitution of 1945 latifundios were specifically declared illegal.<sup>29</sup> With proper indemnization, expropriation of private property "in the public interest" was declared permissible. The Ley de Reforma Agraria declared its purpose to be a change in landholding to further the economic development of the country. No land cultivated by the owner could be expropriated, and if the owner had less than 223 acres he was not subject to expropriation at all.

The government fincas (taken from German owners during World War II) were to be divided into individual plots or into cooperatives if the workers wished. This was the first step taken but the land remained under government ownership; the workers were given lifetime use of it, paying the government 3% of the crop value per annum.

In the case of private lands the government could grant lifetime use or direct ownership to the peasant. In the latter case it could not be sold for 25 years. In expropriation of private lands the payment was in long-term agrarian bonds of the amount listed as the value of the land for taxation in 1952. This value was assessed in the 1930's and was generally far below the actual value of the land.<sup>30</sup>

The idea behind the program was a good one; however the usufructo vitalicio clause was apparently a political means of

---

<sup>29</sup>Latifundio comes from the Latin meaning large land holdings, such as the haciendas and fincas of Guatemala.

<sup>30</sup>Whetten, Guatemala, p. 159.

government control of the peasants.<sup>31</sup> Of the total acreage (917,659) distributed before Arbenz left power, 86.2% was for lifetime use. This is according to government records, which were denounced by the Castillo government as inflated with regard to the actual distribution.<sup>32</sup> The possibility of inaccuracy is accompanied by the fact of chaos in 1954 and the resulting confusion in the records. It is hard, if not impossible, to tell how much land was actually given to peasants.

In spite of the political intentions of the agrarian reform the peasants played an important role in the Presidency of Arbenz. Far more than Arévalo, Arbenz desired Party unity and complete support for his government. Peasant and worker demonstrations helped give him his false security through 1954. In politics the parties could not remain united for long. Different ideologies and leaders refused to bow down to others. In the 1953 Congressional elections a government front of parties was established. After elections Arbenz tried to convert it into a permanent liaison. He had put his agrarian reform through but his strong need for unity led him to attempt what Arévalo had failed to achieve. Arbenz lacked the idealism of Arévalo to attract people and he was not a statesman or a politician. His desire for support perhaps explains his loyalty toward his staunchest supporters, the Communists. It also explains the tales of barbarity supposedly

---

<sup>31</sup>The Usufructo vitalicio clause of the agrarian reform law gave the peasant lifetime use of his lands but the ownership was held by the state.

<sup>32</sup>Whetten, Guatemala, p. 164.

carried out by police chiefs Cruz Wer and Jaime Rosenberg.<sup>33</sup> Whether the stories of cruel torture are true or untrue Arbenz, in 1953 and 1954, "discovered" an amazing number of plots against the government and arrested the leaders, his opponents. At times the uprising was real (as in Salamá, in 1953) but, as in January 1954, it was often a plot discovered in the nick of time to save the country from civil war.

In saving his nation from disaster Arbenz failed to see that destruction was imminent. His country had been in a civil war of a kind since the agrarian reform took violence to the rural lands. With coffee prices changing and precious coffee income being destroyed on the fincas bankruptcy was also imminent. With the war of nerves carried on by radio from rebel broadcasts and the government within the country Castillo Armas could enter Guatemala in triumph.

Jacobo Arbenz had failed to see the signs of the times; his friends led him to believe in a support which did not exist and Communists gave him an unrealistic view of the situation. The Archbishop's pen struck a major blow at the roots of the Arbenz regime when Monseñor Mariano Avellano y Rossell denounced Communist influence. But Arbenz and his friends helped bring about their own destruction in 1954.

At Caracas their strong voice against the communist aggression manifesto was a lonely note of sovereignty. In June Arbenz refused

---

<sup>33</sup>Guatemala, Secretaría de Información de la Presidencia de la República, Genocidio Sobre Guatemala (Guatemala, December 16, 1954). The book is half description and half photos of the tortures which Castillo claimed were practiced during the Presidency of Arbenz.

to recognize the military might of the Army in leaving unanswered the questions of the Army leaders. Fortuny and his Party believed that arming the peasants would save the country; they, too, failed to reckon with the Army.

Even before 1954 Arbenz was preparing his doom. In allowing Communism to become an open (though not absolute) power in the government he found the United States unwilling to help Guatemala. In pushing the agrarian reform law through Congress he called for the hatred of the society that had once snubbed him. Arbenz and his advisers proved to be more revolutionary than their time. Unprepared to meet the situation of revolution, the Americas took the traditional path to smother the threat to their lives of peacefulness. The rebel leader staged a military coup and Arbenz, supported nearly to the last by his friends of the Party, finally faced the nation alone in resigning from the Presidency. Without support Jacobo Arbenz explained he was leaving his office due to overpowering circumstances. Alone and perhaps bitter as he faced his only possible choice, that of exile, Jacobo Arbenz remained an enigma. His closing words, "Viva Guatemala!", suggest he was a nationalist above all. In a moment of glory he led his small nation into a revolution which was perhaps going astray. Nationalist, Marxist, President of Guatemala for three tumultuous years, in his defeat he remained true to himself. Thus ended the story for Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in Guatemala. And thus began a controversy which remains unsettled today.



## V. CONCLUSION: THE BIRTH OF A CONTROVERSY

### I

The 1944-54 period in the history of Guatemala seems to be a story of a revolution gone astray. This description, correct on the surface, is too glib and easy to be accepted by the writer. One can read countless versions of the history; they will say that either the revolution was communist inspired by 1954 or the revolution was snuffed out by the United States in 1954. In 1958 Julio Adolfo Rey seemed to explain the situation in his statement:

"Perhaps the most important truth that emerges from the recent literature on Guatemala is that the real issues underlying the controversy are not those of fact, but those of value."<sup>34</sup>

The controversy lies not in the course of actions but in the motivations and in the people who directed the path of history.

The controversy born in Guatemala in 1954 produced a voluminous amount of literature on the subject. Many Guatemalans and other Americans wrote accounts of the revolutionary era of this small country. The ignominious end of the Presidency of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán was the beginning of a heated discussion which has no answer due to the nature of the issues. This fact is clearly seen in a sur-

---

<sup>34</sup> Julio Adolfo Rey, "Revolution and Liberation: a Review of Recent Literature on the Guatemalan Situation," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXXVIII (1958), 239-55.

vey of the printed words of some of the people involved or aroused by the events in 1954.<sup>35</sup>

Robert J. Alexander. Communism in Latin America. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957.

This book is a survey of all the countries in Latin America and the development of the Communist Party in each. The beginning chapters outline the history and trends of the Party; the succeeding chapters show how the general ideas evolved in each country. His chapter on Guatemala deals particularly with the labor movement, one of the keys to Communist control in Latin America.

Chester Lloyd Jones. Guatemala Past and Present.

Written during the rule of Jorge Ubico Jones provides the necessary historical background for the succeeding years. In the light of more recent events his thesis with regard to Ubico is particularly meaningful. He expresses the belief that Guatemala was unprepared for democracy and, therefore, a strong leader was essential in the 1930's. His insight becomes significant only after a study of the ten years of the revolution.

Nathan Laselle Whetten. Guatemala the Land and the People.

Though the main purpose of this book is not concerned with the

---

<sup>35</sup>The writer was unable to secure various books, due to their scarcity in this country. However, a sampling of approximately half of the written materials have been covered. We have arbitrarily arranged them in this presentation according to their use and their point of view.

revolution the author was forced to deal with the events of 1944-54. A sociological study, Whetten's Guatemala provides an excellent account of agrarian reform actualities. It does not discuss political and personal feelings in this very controversial aspect of Arbenz' years as President.

Whetten adds to the emphasis of change for the Indian which was studied by Richard Adams, editor of Political Changes in Guatemalan Indian Communities: a Symposium. These two books lead one to the inescapable conclusion that the revolution brought changes which will not allow Guatemala to return completely to her old ways. These are proof that the abortive social revolution, a failure politically, was not a total failure.

Stacy May and Galo Plaza. The United Fruit Company in Latin America.

This case study of United States business performance abroad is a good record for the United Fruit Company. It is favorable to the company in its conclusions but it is one of the few, if not the only account which contains data of the United Fruit records in Guatemala. The book also provides a comparison of the records of the company in each country, adding perspective to the Guatemalan case.

Ronald M. Schneider. Communism in Guatemala 1944-1954.

This is a very detailed study of the development of the Communist Party and its activities in the years of revolution. It is a full account of the leaders and their influence in Guatemala. The book is informative and deals with the subject in a factual manner, avoiding involvement in the issues and politics. The importance lies in the approach to the wealth of detail presented in the book.

El Salvador, Secretaría de Información. De la Neutralidad vigilante a la Mediación con Guatemala.

This is a collection of documents and world press reports on events during the Presidency of Arbenz from the withdrawal of Guatemala from the Organization of Central American States to the triumph of Castillo Armas as the new President.

United States Department of State. Intervention of International Communism in Guatemala.

The State Department published this booklet soon after the fall of Arbenz. It uses the information to point to a master plan of a Communist take-over of Guatemala. Basically the account is useful to show the attitude of the United States toward the Arbenz government.

Daniel James. Red Design for the Americas: Guatemalan Prelude.

As the title suggests James' thesis is that the Communist Party had a master plan to take over the Americas from Guatemala. In general the book provides a good account of the decade of revolution. But it is the opinion of this writer that James is unable to prove his major thesis. However, Daniel James was one of the first to write the Guatemalan story in this country and his book has become an important study of a revolution that failed.

Juan José Arévalo. Discursos en la Presidencia, 1945-1948; La democracia y el imperio.

It is necessary to read some of Arévalo's writings and speeches before 1954 to obtain a proper perspective for La democracia y el imperio. Arévalo, a teacher and idealist, was a failure in

politics. His speeches and writings show the nobility of a great man. In his essay Istmania he transcends nationality to call for unity in Central America as the beginning of progress.

But, in 1954, Arévalo was a disillusioned and embittered man. The revolution to which he had given six years of his life was seemingly wiped out. La democracia y el imperio is a vituperative attack on the United States and the United Fruit Company. Arévalo believed that these were the cause of the success of Castillo Armas but he predicted a short term for the new government, believing that democracy would succeed in spite of this setback.

La democracia y el imperio is important, not for the account of events, but for the depth of feeling and conviction of a man involved in the revolution because he believed in it.

Guillermo Toriello Garrido. La batalla de Guatemala.

The author was the Foreign Minister of Guatemala during the first months of 1954. As such he was an important figure during the June crisis. He led the delegation to Caracas and firmly denied the existence of communist influence in Guatemala. He believed that the United Fruit Company was the only source of tension between his country and the United States and that this set in motion plans to overthrow the Arbenz government.

These beliefs and his position in the Arbenz regime shaped the argument of the book he wrote. He included an analysis of the first months of the Castillo government, emphasizing his belief in the revolution which ended in 1954. The result is a well-organized argument of a brilliant mind. Toriello is one of the most convincing writers who favored Arbenz.



Clemente Marroquín Rojas. La derrota de una batalla.

Clemente Marroquín Rojas was quite unconvinced by Toriello's arguments and wrote a reply to La batalla de Guatemala. A newspaperman with a sharp tongue, Marroquín takes each major point and tears it apart paragraph by paragraph. His main thesis is that Arbenz and Toriello tried to fight the "colossus of the North" openly instead of using quiet diplomatic channels, the only path to success where the United States is involved. The book is very readable but does not fulfill its main purpose of proving the worthlessness of Toriello's La batalla de Guatemala.

Manuel Galich. Por que lucha Guatemala: Arévalo y Arbenz, dos hombres contra un imperio.

The author of this book was convinced, as was Arévalo, that Guatemala became a part of the empire of the United States when Castillo Armas became President. Galich deals extensively with the causes of failure of the revolution though he remains loyal to the ideas of social change. In the light of the events of 1954 he suggests that social reforms should have been established before democracy was attempted. However, the main reason for the failure of June 1954 came from without: forces opposed to the revolution and its resultant changes became unified and found the strength to end the Presidency of Arbenz.

Mario Efraín Nájera Farfán. Los estafadores de la democracia. Hombres y hechos en Guatemala.

The author was a member of the party which, in 1944, called Arévalo back from Argentina to run for President. However, Mario

Efraín Nájera believed that the revolution was betrayed by Arbenz. This book is unique in its support for one man while rejecting his successor.

Guatemala, Secretaría de Información de la Presidencia de la República.  
Genocidio sobre Guatemala.

It is almost unnecessary to say that this is clearly a piece of propaganda of the Castillo Armas regime. Published six months after Arbenz was ousted the book tells of the horrors perpetuated by the social revolution and its communist leaders. The stories and photographs lack supporting evidence. The book is valuable only as an example of the Castillo Armas propaganda against Arbenz and Communism.

León de Gandarias. Democracia la mayor arma contra el comunismo.

Another piece of propaganda, this booklet was sponsored by the government. It is as its title suggests, a defense of democracy rather than an attack on the previous regime.

Jorge de Valle Matheu. La verdad sobre el 'caso de Guatemala'.

This third publication under government auspices deals directly with the era of the social revolution; in this it is less propagandistic than the previous two. However, it is an attempt to discredit all pro-Arbenz arguments. The emphasis is on events of the first six months of 1954 which, according to the author, clearly prove that communists were the leaders of Guatemala. It is important that throughout his arguments Valle does not attempt to establish proof that Arbenz was himself a Communist.

Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla. El Quetzal no es rojo.

Samayoa has written a defense of Guatemalans in his account of the revolutionary decade in his homeland. His basic theme is that, though Communists gained positions of power, they did not express the feelings of the majority. In dealing with Arbenz he attempts to explain rather than criticize the actions of the President. More than other Guatemalan authors, Samayoa comes close to discovering the real issues involved.<sup>36</sup>

John D. Martz. Communist Infiltration in Guatemala.

This is a rather brief survey of the use of communism during the presidencies of Arévalo and Arbenz. The general approach is more critical than that taken by the same author in 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. Central America: The Crisis and the Challenge.

This is a survey of the politics of each country of Central America with a pessimistic outlook for the future. In the chapter on Guatemala Martz shows that the beginning of a social revolution has been almost totally wiped out by the successors of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán.

Jaime Díaz Rozzotto. El carácter de la revolución guatemalteca: Ocaso de la revolución democrático-burguesa corriente.

This is a history of the social revolution of Guatemala. Written after it had apparently ended, the book is a Marxist interpretation of the decade spanning the presidencies of Arévalo and Arbenz.

---

<sup>36</sup>See the quotation from Julio Adolfo Rey, at footnote 34.

Luis Cardoza y Aragón. La revolución guatemalteca.

The simple title belies the complexity of a poet's interpretation of the revolution. The author's political affiliation with communism colors his views. This book, however, emphasizes the birth of the controversy. Cardoza y Aragón asks more questions than he answers, more questions than can be answered. The poet's insight shows that he understood the nature of the controversy.

## II

Of the many people involved in the revolution in Guatemala (1944-1954) there were few who realized the full significance of all that occurred.

People who supported Arbenz felt that all was lost in June 1954 and his opponents were quite certain that the days of evil were gone forever.

Castillo Armas quickly assumed power and carried out a thorough purge of all communist-affiliated people in the government. He repealed the agrarian reform law and set forth a new method of reform, less conducive to violence. The new agrarian reform, slow moving from its inception, ground to an almost complete standstill by the time the President was assassinated in 1957. Apparently the social revolution was dead.

Guatemala had taken a step back to her old ways after Arbenz fled the country but the ideas and changes introduced to the people, and especially to the Indians, were enough to hold the door open to further change. The United Fruit Company donated a large tract of land for the government resettlement program. Discussion of the revolution continues, for the controversy born of the Presidency of Jacobo Arbenz has no real answers.

The discernible facts do not point to one person or group as the sole cause of it all. Arbenz fell from power because the situation



of pressure groups interacting brought a crisis to Guatemala. Because he was Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, married to María Cristina Vilanova, his resignation was forthcoming soon after Castillo Armas entered Guatemala. In exile he re-encountered his old friends of the Presidency; Arbenz went to Czechoslovakia. In the era of Arbenz, who at times molded but was often the subject of his destiny, we find the birth of a controversy.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Richard N. (ed.). Political Changes in Guatemalan Indian Communities: a Symposium. New Orleans: Tulane University, 1957.
- Alexander, Robert J. Communism in Latin America. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957.
- Arévalo, Juan José. La democracia y el imperio. Santiago, Chile, 1954.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Discursos en la Presidencia, 1945-48. Guatemala, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Escritos políticos y discursos. Havana, 1953.
- Cardoza y Aragón, Luis. La revolución guatemalteca. Mexico City, 1955.
- Díaz Rozzotto, Jaime. El carácter de la revolución guatemalteca: Ocaso de la revolución democrática-burguesa corriente. Mexico City, 1958.
- Galich, Manuel. Por que lucha Guatemala: Arévalo y Arbenz, dos hombres contra un imperio.
- Gandarias, León de. Democracia: la mayor arma contra el comunismo. Guatemala, 1957.
- Guatemala, Secretaría de Información de la Presidencia de la República. Genocidio sobre Guatemala. Guatemala, 1954.
- Herring, Hubert Clinton, A History of Latin America, 2d. ed.; New York: Knopf, 1961.
- James, David. Red Design for the Americas: Guatemalan Prelude. New York, Praeger, 1954.
- James, Preston Everett. Latin America. 3d. ed.; New York: Odyssey Press, 1959.
- Jones, Chester Lloyd. Guatemala Past and Present. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1940.

- Marroquín Rojas, Clemente. La derrota de una batalla. Guatemala, 1956 (?).
- Martz, John D. Central America: the Crisis and the Challenge. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Communist Infiltration in Guatemala. New York, 1956.
- May, Stacy and Galo Plaza. The United Fruit Company in Latin America. Washington: National Planning Association, 1958.
- Nájera Farfán, Mario Efraín. Los estafadores de la democracia: Hombres y hechos en Guatemala. Buenos Aires, 1956.
- The New York Times, 1954.
- Parker, Franklin D. The Central American Republics. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Reina, Ruben E. Chinautla, a Guatemalan Indian Community. New Orleans: Tulane University, 1960.
- Rey, Julio Adolfo. "Revolution and Liberation: a Review of Recent Literature on the Guatemalan Situation," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXXVIII (1958), 239-55.
- El Salvador, Secretaría de Información. De la neutralidad Vigilante a la mediación con Guatemala. San Salvador, 1954.
- Samayoa Chinchilla, Carlos. El Quetzal no es rojo. Guatemala, 1956.
- Schneider, Ronald M. Communism in Guatemala 1944-1954. New York: Praeger, 1959.
- Toriello Garrido, Guillermo. La batalla de Guatemala. Mexico City, 1955.
- United States Department of State. Intervention of International Communism in Guatemala. Washington: Government Publishing office, 1954.
- Valle Matheu, Jorge del. La verdad sobre el 'caso de Guatemala'. 1956.
- Whetten, Nathan Laselle. Guatemala: The Land and the People. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.

APPENDIX

Guatemala Retires from the Organization  
of Central American States

1. Her letter of resignation.
2. Reply of El Salvador.
3. Resolutions adopted as a result of the resignation of Guatemala.

Guatemala, 4 de Abril de 1953.

Señor Ministro:

Tengo el honor de dirigirme a Vuestra Excelencia para exponerle, con la franqueza y cordialidad que inspiran las relaciones universales de este Gobierno y especialmente con las Repúblicas hermanas de la América Central, las siguientes consideraciones:

Es evidente el espíritu centroamericanista del Gobierno de Guatemala, el fervor con que su pueblo siempre ha mantenido el ideal de reconstrucción de la Patria grande y sus anhelos de acercamiento y comprensión entre los pueblos del Istmo.

Es también conocido el entusiasmo con que esta República ha buscado, en todo tiempo, los medios de llevar a una realización feliz esos anhelos e ideales centroamericanistas, y sus esfuerzos constructivos, leales y sinceros, para crear la Organización de los Estados Centroamericanos, como un instrumento que contribuyera a unirnos y nos ayudara en la solución de nuestros problemas comunes.

Desgraciadamente, Señor Ministro, poderosos círculos interesados en mantener desunidos a los Estados de América Central, por una parte, y en impedir la revolución democrática de Guatemala, por la otra, han sido causa de una serie de hechos graves que paso a exponer a Vuestra Excelencia.

Gran parte de la prensa y los órganos de publicidad centroamericanos se han sumado a la campaña de difamación y calumnias, tendientes a fomentar actos de intervención extranjera en nuestros asuntos internos, impulsada por intereses extranjeros poderosos desde los primeros días del triunfo de la Revolución de 1944 en nuestro país. Esa campaña constituye visiblemente una agresión contra Guatemala.

Aún cuando formalmente algunos Gobiernos Centroamericanos reiteran estar animados por el espíritu de confraternidad, que es base fundamental y única justificación de la Carta de San Salvador, en la práctica se han ignorado las nobles obligaciones



que voluntariamente se impusieron los Gobiernos del Istmo al firmar ese Documento. En efecto: sin contar con Guatemala se han hecho visitas y juntas civiles y militares en los Estados de Centro América, a las que se ha atribuido gran importancia y a las que la prensa centroamericana dió profusa difusión. Nada significaría esa omisión, aunque resulta ser contraria a la unanimidad que expresamente señala el Artículo IX de la Carta, si no se tuviera la información —no desmentida oficialmente ante nuestro Gobierno ni sus Representantes en Centroamérica—, de que en esas reuniones se adoptaron acuerdos que contrarían el tenor del Artículo III de la Ley Constitutiva de la ODECA.

Como ampliación de lo anteriormente aseverado, la prensa centroamericana informó, sin haber sido desmentida, como se dijo, que a iniciativa de la Cancillería Salvadoreña se suscribió por Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica y Panamá, un pacto político-militar que, con el pretexto de "contrarrestar el comunismo", en la práctica no es más que la constitución de un bloque agresivo contra nuestro país.

Como es del conocimiento de Vuestra Excelencia, el Gobierno Salvadoreño ha pedido la inclusión en la Agenda de la Conferencia de Cancilleres del 2 de Mayo, de un punto relativo a "contrarrestar la acción subversiva del comunismo internacional".

Guatemala respeta el derecho que cada Gobierno tiene de pronunciarse en el sentido que lo crea conveniente, pero es el caso que la mencionada propuesta, aunque naturalmente sin proponérselo el Gobierno Salvadoreño, coincide con el pretexto que esgrime la oposición reaccionaria de Guatemala para obstaculizar la realización del programa progresista de mi Gobierno, al igual que con el pretexto de los círculos internacionales que preparan y provocan una intervención en los asuntos internos de nuestro país, persiguiendo destruir la democracia guatemalteca y proteger los intereses de los monopolios que operan en esta Nación como en el resto de las Naciones Centroamericanas.

La oposición reaccionaria local, fracasada en múltiples oportunidades en sus propósitos subversivos y antidemocráticos, ha hecho suya la propuesta del Gobierno Salvadoreño y pretende alcanzar a través de ella los objetivos que no ha podido hacer hasta la fecha una realidad por falta de respaldo popular. Tal situación es intolerable para el Gobierno de Guatemala y perjudica gravemente las normales relaciones entre los Estados Centroamericanos.

En estos mismos momentos nuestro Gobierno ha superado una prueba más, que al mismo tiempo que reitera su solidez de amplio respaldo popular pone de manifiesto que la conspiración

denunciada rebasa los límites de sus fronteras. En efecto: plazas importantes del centro de la República, con fecha 29 del mes de marzo fueron asaltadas por gente armada con pertrechos extranjeros y se sabe ya que esperaban auxilios aéreos procedentes del exterior. Una vez substanciado el sumario, iniciado por autoridades competentes, señalaremos el origen de tales conexiones.

Respondiendo a la consulta que democráticamente realizó mi Gobierno en relación a la Conferencia de Cancilleres Centroamericanos, las organizaciones democráticas han coincidido en demandar del Gobierno que se retire de la ODECA, considerando que su permanencia en la misma compromete, en los actuales momentos, la soberanía, la independencia nacional y la libre realización de los objetivos de la Revolución guatemalteca.

Por tanto, ante la situación general, mi Gobierno se ha visto en la necesidad de dirigirse a la Organización de las Naciones Unidas y al Consejo de Seguridad, denunciando las amenazas de intervención, en nota cuya copia se acompaña a la presente. Por las mismas razones, el Gobierno de Guatemala denuncia la Carta de San Salvador y se retira de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos (ODECA).

No obstante esta decisión, mi Gobierno reitera de manera categórica su lealtad a los ideales centroamericanistas y, en consecuencia, está presto a concertar en el futuro todos aquellos convenios que persigan favorecer el desarrollo de la economía nacional de los países Centroamericanos, a elevar el nivel de vida de los pueblos y favorecer un estrecho y fraternal intercambio cultural centroamericano.

Sírvase aceptar Vuestra Excelencia mis altas muestras de consideración y aprecio.

(f) Raúl Osegueda  
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores.

Excmo. señor don Roberto E. Canessa,  
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores,  
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR.

PALACIO NACIONAL

San Salvador, 9 de abril de 1953

DEPARTAMENTO DE ORGANISMOS  
INTERNACIONALES

A-800-

D 791

Excelencia:

Con gran sorpresa se ha enterado mi Gobierno, por su nota N° 4785 fechada el 4 de abril de 1953, de que el Gobierno de Guatemala denuncia la Carta de San Salvador y se retira de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos. Es mayor el sentimiento que tal actitud produce, al tomar en cuenta que el Gobierno Guatemalteco no sólo trata de fundamentar tal actitud en motivos totalmente injustificados, sino que aprovecha la oportunidad para inferir graves ofensas a los gobiernos y pueblos hermanos, atribuyéndoles hechos e intenciones totalmente alejados de la verdad. Es además lamentable que este paso negativo en la política centroamericana del Gobierno Guatemalteco tome como pretexto una absurda confabulación internacional para intervenir en los asuntos internos de Guatemala y trate de malograr un organismo que permite concebir fundadas esperanzas en el porvenir, ya que las condiciones de inestabilidad internacional en que nuestros Estados se han debatido a lo largo de su historia, se deben precisamente a que no han sabido formar un frente común de intereses y de propósitos. El sentimiento centroamericanista de que reiteradamente ha hecho alarde el Gobierno de Guatemala, al que alude en su citada nota, se ve desmentido por hechos tan deplorables como es el repudio de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos.

Es sabido de todos que hay fuerzas de inspiración internacional que han venido conspirando para distanciar a los Gobiernos del Istmo y para mantenerlos en estado de debilidad, con el objeto de hacerlos presa fácil en sus planes de dominación mundial. Por tal motivo, el Gobierno de El Salvador lamenta, como Vuestra Excelencia lo expresa, que esos "poderosos círculos interesados en mantener desunidos a los Estados de la América Central, por una parte, y en impedir la revolución democrática

de Guatemala, por la otra", vean satisfecho y cumplido ese primer interés apuntado por Vuestra Excelencia, con el paso atrás que el Gobierno de Guatemala da en el camino de la unidad centroamericana, retirándose de la ODECA. En lo que a El Salvador concierne, no está demás agregar que es tan grande su fervor unionista y su fe en la grandeza y en el futuro de Centro América que ni su gobierno ni su pueblo conciben que haya círculos suficientemente capaces o poderosos para cambiar su ruta inequívoca de integración centroamericana.

Es obvio que el Gobierno de Guatemala se ha dejado impresionar por una falsa propaganda destinada a crear dificultades en la América Central y a mantener desarticulados a los países que la componen. Y es precisamente el repudio que su Gobierno hace a la ODECA el que viene a alejar aún más la realización de los objetivos de unión centroamericana, que no puede lograrse sin un entendimiento sincero y respetuoso entre los pueblos del Istmo. La historia seguramente condenará la medida precipitada del actual Gobierno de Guatemala y la señalará como un retroceso en el creciente acercamiento de nuestros pueblos.

El Gobierno de El Salvador, con plena conciencia de su responsabilidad, declara que en ningún momento ha formado o pretendido formar bloques agresivos ni alianzas políticas o militares contra Guatemala, y que jamás ha auspiciado movimientos de propaganda o de subversión en contra de esa hermana República. El principio de no intervención ha sido y es parte de la conciencia política salvadoreña y ha sido escrupulosamente respetado y mantenido por mi Gobierno. No cabe duda, sin embargo, que hay en juego grandes intereses internacionales, a cuya propaganda tenaz y mal intencionada, se debe el hecho de que desde hace varios meses circulen las más fantásticas especulaciones sobre la política centroamericana.

Mientras esa propaganda no fué sino la expresión de individuos o de grupos que viven de espaldas a los intereses de la nacionalidad centroamericana, no había motivo de preocupación, dado que toda obra y sobre todo las buenas obras, tienen la virtud de atraer despechos e iras. Lo grave del caso es que el Gobierno de Guatemala se haya hecho eco de tales especies, sin esclarecer previamente la situación imperante, ya fuese a través de las Cancillerías centroamericanas o recurriendo al mecanismo de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos, instituido, conforme el Art. I de su Carta constitutiva, para "prevenir y conjurar toda desavenencia y asegurar la solución pacífica de cualquier conflicto que pudiera surgir" entre los Estados miembros. Dentro de la amistad de nuestros pueblos y gobiernos lo natural hubiera sido aclarar los puntos dudosos, si es que los había, actuando en armonía con los postulados centroamericanos.



No obstante, el Gobierno de Guatemala formula ante la Secretaría General y el Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas, graves acusaciones en contra de las Repúblicas de Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panamá y El Salvador, olvidando no sólo los preceptos de la Carta Orgánica de la ODECA, sino los compromisos asumidos conforme a la Carta de la Organización de los Estados Americanos, suscrita por todas las Repúblicas del Continente, cuyo artículo 20 dispone que "todas las controversias que surjan entre los Estados americanos serán sometidas a los procedimientos señalados por la Carta, antes de ser elevados al Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas".

Alude la nota comentada a que las noticias periodísticas sobre una pretendida alianza militar contra Guatemala no fueron desmentidas ante el Gobierno de esa República ni ante sus Embajadores. Este es un argumento que no cabe dentro de la realidad de los acontecimientos. En efecto, en las declaraciones oficiales que la Cancillería a mi cargo dió a la prensa —y que pueden verse reproducidas en el diario "Tribuna Libre" de San Salvador en sus ediciones del 10 y del 12 de febrero de 1953— el suscrito desmintió de modo rotundo y categórico la versión que circuló sobre un pretendido pacto político-militar centroamericano, diciendo textualmente lo siguiente: "la Cancillería salvadoreña sigue una política centroamericanista legal, sincera y definida. Por eso mismo, no se ocupa ni se ocupará jamás de formular acuerdos o hacer negociaciones secretas que en alguna forma lesionen los intereses de alguno de los hermanos países del Istmo".

Así pues, la información dada por la prensa, sobre el pretendido pacto político-militar, fué desmentida por mi Gobierno por ese mismo conducto. Como la noticia no provino de fuente oficial, mi Gobierno consideró innecesario desvanecerla directamente ante el de Guatemala. Tomando en cuenta que éste no pidió aclaraciones al respecto, esta Cancillería entendió que el Gobierno de Guatemala comprendía lo infundado de la especie. Resulta pues, extraño e ilógico que, después de haber dejado pasar sin comentario una noticia carente, con toda evidencia, de veracidad, se le traiga a cuentas para justificar el retiro de Guatemala de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos. Es de sentir que Guatemala apoye en un rumor infundado una resolución de tanta trascendencia para los altos intereses de la América Central.

Confirmando lo anterior, cabe agregar que el Gobierno de Costa Rica, por medio del Excelentísimo señor Presidente don Otilio Ulate, desmintió también en su oportunidad la noticia periodística sobre la alianza político-militar.



El Gobierno de El Salvador no da a las noticias extraoficiales ni a las declaraciones de ciudadanos que no desempeñan funciones públicas, la importancia que parece darles el Gobierno de Guatemala. Si la buena fe de los Gobiernos se mide por comentarios o noticias dudosas o mal intencionadas, no sería posible mantener la armonía internacional entre los países que gozan de libertad de expresión.

El Gobierno de Guatemala se queja de que la prensa de varios países centroamericanos, inclusive El Salvador, le hace ataques que no responden a su verdadera situación interna. Es lamentable en grado sumo que los comentarios periodísticos no sean valorizados como manifestaciones de la libertad de opinión. El Gobierno salvadoreño jamás ha propiciado críticas contra el Gobierno de Guatemala, ni nunca un funcionario público salvadoreño le ha hecho ataques; actitud que no ha sido correspondida por funcionarios guatemaltecos. Los mismos órganos periodísticos que ocasionalmente se refieren a los asuntos de Guatemala, atacan cuando lo creen conveniente al Gobierno de El Salvador.

Por otra parte, el Gobierno de Guatemala no tiene ningún derecho a quejarse de la actitud de la prensa salvadoreña, porque en su territorio se desarrollan violentos ataques contra el Gobierno de El Salvador y contra los demás Gobiernos centroamericanos. El Gobierno de El Salvador nunca ha reclamado al de Guatemala por la campaña sistemática y pertinaz de calumnias y descréditos que se realiza en su territorio por medio de discursos y órganos de publicidad. El Gobierno de Guatemala, tolera, además, la propaganda antipatriótica que desarrollan salvadoreños entregados al imperialismo soviético, quienes pretenden ser defensores de una libertad en que no creen y que solamente aprovechan para sus planes de desintegración nacional. El Gobierno salvadoreño, conocedor de esos hechos, no ha protestado por ellos estimando, por una parte, que el Gobierno de Guatemala no participa en ellos, y por otra que, cuando hay libertad de expresión, esa propaganda no puede ser restringida sino dentro de las vías legales. La actitud del Gobierno de Guatemala ante la libertad de expresión es la que mantiene mi Gobierno ante los periódicos salvadoreños. Es raro que ese Gobierno se queje de algo que en su territorio existe y se respeta tanto como en El Salvador.

Este punto, señalado en la nota del 4 de abril, carece de fundamento y no justifica el retiro de la ODECA, ni prueba que El Salvador participe en una conspiración contra Guatemala.

El Gobierno de ese pueblo hermano toma como índice de los pretendidos manejos salvadoreños, el hecho de que varias mi-

siones civiles y militares de diversos países centroamericanos se hayan hecho visitas durante los últimos meses. Aun haciendo un esfuerzo para deducir de esas visitas lo que pretende la nota de la Cancillería guatemalteca, no se llega sino a confirmar que cuando hay suspicacias, se desvirtúa el recto y natural sentido de los acontecimientos. Intercambios de ese tipo, según la nota aludida, contrarían el criterio de unanimidad que prescribe la Carta constitutiva de la ODECA.

Dicha Carta, ni explícita ni implícitamente restringe los contactos entre funcionarios centroamericanos. Antes bien, su espíritu propicia el mayor entendimiento y cordialidad entre los organismos oficiales. Es imposible pretender, por su falta de viabilidad que toda visita a un país se haga por misiones conjuntas del resto de los Estados. Pero si en alguna forma se hubiese tomado ese acuerdo, el Gobierno salvadoreño lo hubiera cumplido, advirtiéndole que, a su juicio, nunca la desconfianza ha sido constructiva.

Por otra parte, misiones guatemaltecas y salvadoreñas, militares y civiles, han contribuido en los últimos tiempos a la mejor comprensión entre nuestros dos Gobiernos, sin que dichosamente la falta de funcionarios de los otros países en esas entrevistas, provocase sospechas o malos entendimientos. Es inaceptable, pues, que a una forma de estrechar vínculos, usada por el Gobierno de Guatemala, venga éste a darle, repentinamente, el carácter de signo de confabulación agresiva. Es por ello que el Gobierno salvadoreño rechaza enérgicamente los alcances que la nota aludida atribuye a esas visitas.

La ponencia anticomunista que el Gobierno de El Salvador presentó a la consideración de los Gobiernos Centroamericanos, para que se incluyera como tema de discusión en la proyectada Conferencia de Cancilleres, es asunto que merece estudiarse desde sus orígenes.

El Gobierno de El Salvador estima que la doctrina y acción del comunismo internacional son una amenaza efectiva en contra de los pueblos libres del mundo y de los principios básicos de toda organización democrática. También ha creído mi Gobierno que una de las más caras aspiraciones de los pueblos es la realización de la justicia social, sin la que es imposible en esta época histórica, conseguir el progreso verdadero ni la verdadera paz. La doctrina comunista y la actividad internacional del imperialismo soviético que predicán la dictadura, el despotismo político y el odio de clases, constituyen, a juicio del Gobierno salvadoreño, los mayores obstáculos para la democracia, la justicia social y el desarrollo económico. Es por ello que mi Gobierno se ha trazado, en su política interna, una línea de defensa absoluta ante

el comunismo internacional. Al Gobierno salvadoreño no le interesa, sin embargo, la forma en que cada país resuelva sus problemas sociales y económicos. Si hay o no hay comunismo en otro país y si el Gobierno de ese país lo ve con benevolencia o antipatía, es cosa que a nosotros no nos concierne. Lo que mi Gobierno desea es que esas actividades no invadan su territorio, y, así como respeta a sus vecinos, reclama que se le respete. El Gobierno de Guatemala conoce y recuerda sobre este particular los ocursos diplomáticos que mi Gobierno le ha presentado generalmente por vía verbal, con objeto de poner un valladar a la infiltración que por medio de agentes y propaganda comunistas se ha venido efectuando a través de nuestra frontera.

El Salvador ha sufrido constantemente la presión de actividades subversivas ejercidas por agentes comunistas internacionales, y, dado que aún aceptando la buena voluntad del Gobierno de Guatemala para poner fin a esa penetración a través de la frontera, no fué posible lograr ningún éxito, el Gobierno salvadoreño pensó en un medio para buscar solución adecuada a la importancia y magnitud del problema. Así, ante aquella amenaza que parecía no ceder nunca, sino volverse más y más grave, se pensó en utilizar los medios de cooperación que ofrece la ODECA, para llegar a un acuerdo destinado a impedir la infiltración del comunismo. La actitud salvadoreña nunca tuvo por objeto el comunismo o el anticomunismo en el interior de Guatemala, sino un convenio que llevase seguridad y tranquilidad mutuas a los vecinos centroamericanos.

El Gobierno salvadoreño no presentó el punto intempestivamente, sino que por medio de notas estrictamente confidenciales, lo dió a conocer a los Gobiernos centroamericanos, haciendo constar que sería presentado a la Reunión de Cancilleres, si aquellos daban su asentimiento previo.

Desafortunadamente, y no obstante el carácter muy confidencial de tal documento, su contenido trascendió en Guatemala al conocimiento público, tuvo amplia difusión y provocó diversos comentarios y ataques al Gobierno de El Salvador. Es de consignarse también que algún tiempo después, el Canciller Galich, signatario de la Carta de San Salvador, renunciaba de su cargo de Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Guatemala, haciendo en su dimisión ataques infundados en contra de los Gobiernos que hasta el mismo día le habían tendido su mano amiga. A raíz de la publicación de la propuesta salvadoreña los agentes del imperialismo soviético recrudecieron su campaña contra la causa unionista y contra todo lo que significa un criterio independiente y un sentido de nacionalidad centroamericana. En estas condiciones, el Gobierno de mi país, sin el mínimo deseo de causar molestias al de Vuestra Excelencia, no podía

ya ceder en su posición. Así, cuando el Gobierno de Guatemala planteó al de El Salvador la posibilidad de que éste retirara o modificara sustancialmente su ponencia anticomunista, la respuesta fué negativa, fundada en principios de independencia y dignidad nacional.

Es más, al presentar su propuesta anticomunista, mi Gobierno trataba de reafirmar en las relaciones centroamericanas los principios, declaraciones y recomendaciones contenidos en documentos interamericanos suscritos por El Salvador, lo mismo que por Guatemala y demás países de Centro América y de este Hemisferio, en los que se condena explícitamente la acción nociva del comunismo internacional, dirigida contra cualquiera de las Repúblicas de América, con objeto de que tal actitud pueda ser prevenida y sancionada. Entre esos documentos se encuentran la Resolución VI de la Segunda Reunión de Consulta de los Cancilleres Americanos, celebrada en La Habana en 1940; la Resolución XXXII de la Novena Conferencia Internacional Americana, suscrita en Bogotá en 1948; y las Resoluciones I y VIII suscritas en la Cuarta Reunión de Consulta de Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores, que tuvo lugar en Washington en Abril de 1951, y a las cuales el actual Gobierno de Guatemala dió su asentimiento y aprobación sin reservas de ninguna clase.

Al hacer mención de tales documentos interamericanos, no me mueve otro propósito que el de hacer notar que, por haberlos suscrito el Gobierno de Guatemala, al igual que el Gobierno de El Salvador y los del resto de Centro América, no podía juzgarse improcedente el hecho de que mi Gobierno propusiera la inclusión del punto relativo a contrarrestar la acción subversiva del comunismo internacional, en el programa de la Reunión de Cancilleres Centroamericanos que debía de realizarse en Guatemala.

No pudo imaginarse mi Gobierno que siendo la acción del comunismo internacional, como lo han declarado reiteradamente las Repúblicas Americanas, de carácter netamente intervencionista, pudiera interpretarse que tiene ese mismo carácter la actitud defensiva encaminada a contrarrestar las actividades del mismo.

Es lamentable que ideales de tan alta estirpe, como son los que tienden a la unidad y grandeza de Centro América, se vean menospreciados con facilidad, y más lamentable todavía que la desconfianza haya enturbiado el ambiente del Istmo. Al Gobierno de Guatemala le cabe la responsabilidad histórica de haberse hecho eco de esas maniobras divisionistas.

La nota guatemalteca constituye una agresión moral contra un pueblo amigo, desde luego que indocumentadamente le atri-



buye cargos que pretenden desconocer su neutralidad y la rectitud de su política.

Es de esperar que el Gobierno de Guatemala comprenda y reconozca la verdadera actitud del Gobierno de El Salvador y la de los demás Gobiernos Centroamericanos. El Gobierno salvadoreño excita muy cordialmente al Gobierno de Guatemala para esclarecer los malos entendimientos y para que retorne al seno de la familia centroamericana, reintegrándose a la ODECA.

Válgome de esta oportunidad para reiterar a Vuestra Excelencia las seguridades de mi más alta y distinguida consideración.

ROBERTO E. CANESSA,  
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores.

Excmo. Señor Lic. don Raúl Osegueda  
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores,  
Guatemala.

NOTA: El texto de la anterior carta, fué redactado por una Comisión presidida por el Señor Presidente Oscar Osorio.



Los Gobiernos de Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras y Nicaragua,

CONSIDERANDO:

Que el Gobierno de la República de Guatemala ha denunciado la Carta de San Salvador, constitutiva de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos;

Que los restantes Gobiernos Centroamericanos mantienen la más firme e inquebrantable adhesión a los principios de la referida Carta y el deseo de lograr la consecución de sus propósitos;

Que la decisión del Gobierno de Guatemala sitúa a los referidos Gobiernos en la necesidad de adoptar un nuevo pronunciamiento sobre su determinación de continuar unidos dentro de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos,

ACUERDAN:

1º—Considerar vigente entre las Repúblicas de Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras y Nicaragua, la Carta de San Salvador constitutiva de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos.

2º—Excitar al Gobierno de Guatemala, por conducto del de Costa Rica, a que reconsidere su denuncia de la Carta de San Salvador, y reingrese a la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos.

3º—Fijar el plazo de seis meses a contar de esta fecha para que dentro de él se convoque a la próxima Reunión ordinaria de Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores por el Gobierno de Nicaragua, a cuyo país corresponde la sede de conformidad con el orden rotativo que establece el Artículo 8º de la Carta de San Salvador.

4º—Comisionar al Gobierno de Costa Rica para conservar el original del presente Acuerdo, librando copias certificadas a

los Ministerios de Relaciones de los países signatarios, y para efectuar su registro en la Secretaría General de las Naciones Unidas conforme el Artículo 102 de su carta.

5º—Denominar el presente Acuerdo "ACUERDO DE SAN JOSE".

En fe de lo cual, los Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores de Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras y Nicaragua, firman este documento en la ciudad de San José, a los dieciséis días del mes de abril de mil novecientos cincuenta y tres.

San Salvador, 12 de Julio de 1953.

LA REUNION EXTRAORDINARIA DE MINISTROS DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES CENTROAMERICANOS,

CONSIDERANDO:

1º—Que en la “Declaración de San José” de 16 de Abril de 1953 se acordó que en esta Reunión Extraordinaria se adoptarían las modificaciones de la Carta de San Salvador que se estimaran convenientes en vista del retiro de Guatemala como miembro de la Organización;

2º—Que fué la intención de los Estados signatarios de dicha Carta fundar un Organismo Regional capaz de utilizar los elementos de una cultura y una historia comunes a los pueblos del Istmo y de estimular los vínculos fraternales que los unen, para cooperar en el ámbito Centroamericano al desarrollo del sentimiento de solidaridad humana bajo normas de justicia y de respeto a los postulados del Derecho Internacional que procuran las Naciones Unidas y la Organización de los Estados Americanos;

3º—Que ninguna disposición de dicha Carta crea para los Estados signatarios obligaciones o derechos que no les hubieran sido ya atribuidos por las Cartas de San Francisco y Bogotá, y que puedan ser afectados por el simple hecho del retiro de uno o más de esos Estados del seno de la Organización;

4º—Que la misma Declaración de San José ya declaró que la Carta de San Salvador continúa vigente entre Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras y Nicaragua;

5º—Que después de haberse estudiado con amplitud la situación existente se ha llegado a la conclusión de que el retiro de Guatemala no ha producido ni puede producir modificaciones en los principios que sustenta la vida de este Organismo Regional ni en los propósitos que el mismo persigue, por lo cual no es necesario modificar la Carta de San Salvador; y en cuanto al nombre de Guatemala que figura en ella debe entenderse automáticamente eliminado por el retiro de ese país, el cual podrá,

cuando lo estime oportuno, reingresar a la ODECA como miembro que fué de ella;

#### RESUELVE:

1º—Que no es procedente hacer cambio alguno en la estructura jurídica de la Carta de San Salvador.

2º—Que Guatemala podrá reingresar a la Organización, cuando lo estime conveniente.

La Reunión Extraordinaria de Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores Centroamericanos,

#### CONSIDERANDO:

Que los países miembros de la ODECA fundan sus instituciones en los principios democráticos del derecho soberano de los pueblos a gobernarse por sí mismos y del respeto a los derechos y libertados del hombre;

Que las actividades del comunismo internacional tienden a subvertir esas instituciones mediante la esclavización de los pueblos y de los individuos;

Que de conformidad con el Artículo 1º de la Carta de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos, es deber de la Organización buscar solución conjunta a sus problemas comunes mediante la acción cooperativa y solidaria;

Que las Repúblicas integrantes de la Organización de Estados Centroamericanos, conscientes de la unidad de sus propósitos de defender y preservar las instituciones democráticas fundamentales de sus pueblos, son signatarias de la Resolución VI de la Segunda Reunión de Cancilleres celebrada en La Habana, Cuba; de la Declaración de México de la Confederación de Chapultepec; de la Resolución XXXII de la Novena Conferencia Internacional Americana, celebrada en Bogotá, Colombia, y de la Declaración de Washington y la Resolución VIII de la Cuarta Reunión de Consulta de Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores, celebrada en Washington, Estados Unidos de América;

Que es de urgencia para la tranquilidad de sus pueblos, justamente alarmados por las actividades de los agentes del comunismo internacional, reafirmar los propósitos planteados en aquellas reuniones internacionales, adoptar medidas conjuntas de defensa y hacerlas efectivas mediante una acción solidaria,

**RESUELVE:**

**PRIMERO:** Reafirmar los principios democráticos como base fundamental de las Instituciones de los países de Centroamérica.

**SEGUNDO:** Reconocer la necesidad de mejorar las condiciones sociales, económicas y culturales de sus pueblos, como el medio más eficaz para fortalecer sus instituciones democráticas.

**TERCERO:** Reiterar la condenación del comunismo internacional que tiende a suprimir los derechos y libertades políticos y civiles.

**CUARTO:** Recomendar a sus Gobiernos que adopten dentro de sus respectivos territorios y de conformidad con sus preceptos constitucionales, medidas conducentes a prevenir, contrarrestar y sancionar las actividades subversivas de los agentes comunistas, y especialmente las encaminadas a:

- a) Impedir el uso indebido de documentos de viaje;
- b) Impedir la difusión y circulación de propaganda subversiva;
- c) Prohibir la exportación de materiales estratégicos a países dominados por gobiernos comunistas; y
- d) Suministrarse recíprocamente toda información sobre las actividades que desarrollen los agentes comunistas.

**QUINTO:** Recomendar asimismo a los Gobiernos de los países miembros de la ODECA que se comuniquen las medidas que adopten en cumplimiento de esta Resolución, que los Ministros encargados se consulten sobre estas materias, y si los Gobiernos lo estiman conveniente, se reúnan de conformidad con el Artículo 4º de la Carta Constitutiva de la Organización.

**SEXTO:** Este documento será conocido como "RESOLUCION DE MANAGUA".